

hierarchies, graphical maps, sample extracts, abstracts, summary descriptions, hypertext, etc. 1194. Those presentation methods would be an important area for further research by means of the CB-PD Module 1212, 1214 to improve their accuracy and value for specific types of users who are engaged in specific tasks to help them achieve their particular objectives.

There are differences between the preferred embodiment and this expression of the invention. For example, in the preferred embodiment the providers of the invention's information were a product's customers; the users of the information were the product's vendors; though these two groups have many common purposes and goals, they do not generally share the knowledge that comes from this invention except to provide improved products. In the embodiment of the invention described here, this dichotomy disappears. The invention fosters the creation of rapidly self-evolving digital environments: Users of the environment(s) both provide value judgments and they see the analyzed data from the users of the environment(s); in essence, the "marketplace" provides the data and makes use of it, becoming "self-aware" in a new and self-determined way. Thus, this embodiment of the invention provides a new type of marketplace "self-guidance system."

VLR Servers that may be accessed directly as marketplace self-guidance systems may expand the value of the present invention. Modern societies have an amazing capacity to generate an overabundance of mediocre information. Consider that an average 18-year old in the US has spent nearly 50% more time in front of television than in school, and been exposed to some 18,000 televised murders. New digital environments are poised on the brink of providing new environments within which people can be inundated by gargantuan quantities of dubious information. With the growth of cross-border data flows, this information will be generated by a growing number of societies worldwide, dwarfing the current nation-sized communications channels. Without systems like a "Value Locator Repository" so that customers of these environments can dynamically discover and provide clear paths to the most valuable information, civilization may be condemned to a withering bombardment by overwhelming quantities of potentially harmful information.

Once such systems are in place and "value locators" may be looked up or employed interactively during one's work, other ramifications are available: Individual "value locators," or groups of them, could be turned into personal or organizational filters. These filters could enable individuals, workers, business units and organizations to personalize these new digital environments to fit their needs and desires. Consider how such filters could work. Embodiments such as VLR Servers enable individuals and groups to identify patterns of meaningful information sources, and to download those to their own local systems. With appropriate "gatekeeping" software, these navigational pointers could also provide meaningful filters or search tools. As filters they could screen out information sources not on or similar to these pre-selected lists. As search tools they could be employed to locate additional instances of content or function that resemble those already on the lists. Examples include be a television viewer-controlled system in which audiences have the ability to rate the acceptability of violence in particular television shows and movies interactively while watching them. As a result, each show could have one or more viewer-set indicators or measures on one or more "violence scales." By selecting a filter point of how much violence a viewing household is willing to accept

(perhaps by time of day so that adults and children could set different levels), shows that exceed that level of violence would automatically be excluded (of course, viewers could turn on particular shows when they want, or reset their violence scale by altering a control, such as by moving a slider). In another television example, some news shows concentrate on politics, others on foreign events, many local news shows focus on local fires and murders, and what is called "tabloid journalism" offers what has been termed "sleaze." With such a VLR-based system as described here, viewers may be able to set personal filters that pro-actively assist in selecting the type of news in which they are interested, and the best shows in that category as judged by groups of viewers whose standards are similar to theirs. In sum, through the coordinated use of the information in VLR Servers, it is possible to construct readily available systems for personalizing and customizing many types of digital environments.

In an evolutionary mode, the users of these customized filters could make their choices and identities known to the VLR Servers from which they download their filter patterns. By doing so, the VLRs would serve as even more types of repositories for vendors who provide additional material that meets the needs of those buyers (whether the material is a TV show, a medical monitor that could work in several ways, or a software product). Such systems could enable customers to use their combined preferences and purchasing goals to guide vendors in more self-conscious ways than are possible today, to receive the market outcomes that consumers would rather have. Such customer-directed marketplace repositories provide clear metrics on the size and scope of particular market segments and specific customer objectives, along with identifying specific purchasers who want to be contacted with improved products and services. With clearer product improvement goals and focused communications, the savings from these efficiencies and the higher performance from achieving these goals can be shared as higher profits for first-to-market vendors and greater performance for early-adopter buyers.

Instead of the relatively closed communications systems described in the preferred embodiment, this embodiment provides: (1) the identification of "value" can be an active part of product use across marketplaces and digital environments, (2) that knowledge could be embodied in "Value Locator Repositories" that is employed by larger numbers of users so that they immediately receive greater value from products, services and environments (hereafter "products"), (3) those VLRs could be accessible during product use to improve performance interactively and immediately, (4) preferred sets of "value locators" could be downloaded to serve as filters to customize the digital environment to produce more of the product use outcomes purchasers prefer, (5) filters and those who employ them (where users are willing to share that information) could be stored on the VLRs where vendors could access them to learn what customers want to buy across the marketplace, (6) responsive vendors can serve those needs faster, producing more rapid evolution toward the types of human welfare people themselves would like.

One result could be faster evolution of products, services, environments and markets to supply the types of human and product progress people need and want to purchase. A second result could be a faster transfer of commercial guidance from vendors to those who pay the money (e.g., customers). In the end, since customers spend the money they could now have an independent self-conscious ability, with interactive market-wide communications, to steer vendors toward selling them the world they would like to buy.